HINDI IMPOSITION PAPERS

Volume 15

Safety, Health and Welfare of Non-Hindi Peoples at Risk

plus

Computers, Internet and Hindi

Thanjai Nalankilli

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edited by
Thanjai Nalankilli

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Numbers in parentheses indicate number of articles by the author in this volume.

Hindi Imposition Papers
All You Wanted to Know about Hindi imposition and More

This fifteen-volumes book contains over 100 articles on the subject of Hindi imposition in India. Researchers, scholars, historians and students who want to get an in-depth understanding of India's language policy may go through these articles one by one. Others may casually browse through these volumes, stopping to read those articles that interest them. You may find lots of interesting and useful information in these articles.

Even if you are reading these articles a hundred years from now, these articles will tell you the history of the development and evolution of India's Hindi imposition policies and opposition to it, starting from 1938 to 2019. This is part of Indian history. India's language problem is an ongoing problem. We do not know where all this will lead to and how this will end.

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Preface

Thanjai Nalankilli

This volume consists of two parts.

Part I: Safety, Health and Welfare of Non-Hindi Peoples at Risk

Indian Government is putting the safety, health and welfare of non-Hindi peoples at risk by providing important safety and health information in English and Hindi only (not in people's mother tongue) and posting officials who do not know the state language in non-Hindi states. Several examples are presented

Part II: Computers, Internet and Hindi

You can be certain that if Indian Government touches something, Hindi imposition and Hindi imperialism will immediately follow. Fortunately computer technology development and Internet were out of the hands of Indian government to a great extent. Whenever Indian Government could control something on the Internet, Hindi hegemony follows immediately. Some examples are presented in Part II chapters of this volume.

(First Published: April 2020)

1.
Impact of Hindi Imperialism on AIDS Prevention and Control

K. S.

[Indian Government sponsors AIDS prevention and control books in Hindi only. How does it affect non-Hindi peoples?]

OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. AIDS Prevention Information
3. Final Comments

1. Introduction

I am a physician (medical doctor). I had this information for quite some time. I was hesitant to mix India's official language controversy with healthcare. More and more I thought about it, I felt that I should write about it and let people make up their own minds.

It relates to the arrogant, discriminatory language policies of the Indian Government in virtually every sphere of life, for example railways and banks. Unfortunately this type of Hindi-centered attitude ("benefits for Hindi speakers only") has entered the sphere of health and welfare services provided by the Indian Government also.

2. AIDS Prevention Information

AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) is a menace to the human race. Although there is no cure for AIDS and there is no vaccine to prevent it, certain relatively simple measures by individuals could protect them from getting this dreaded disease. Western countries have substantially decreased the spread of AIDS by widely disseminating such protection/prevention information to the masses.

While the spread of AIDS is somewhat under control in western countries, it is spreading fast in some African and Asian countries. Unfortunately India is one such country. India has the highest number of infections in the world. More than 3 million adults in India are already infected by AIDS. The best way to control the spread of AIDS in India is the same tactics that western countries used -- wide dissemination of AIDS prevention information to the public.

Degreed doctors such as myself can get the necessary AIDS prevention information from English books and pamphlets. But most people see doctors only after they are sick. So doctors are not in a position to disseminate AIDS prevention information on a large scale. Life-saving AIDS prevention information should reach people through paramedical

personnel, social workers, village council (panchayat) workers and teachers who come to contact with people more often than doctors. These non-degreed medical workers may or may not have sufficient command of the English language to understand English books on AIDS prevention. **They would be in a much better position to help people if such books are available in their mother tongues (not just English and Hindi).**

Indian Government, in fact, realized this. So the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (Government of India) allocated funds in 1999 to write AIDS prevention related books. A good move. That is where the language discrimination came in. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare **(Government of India) allocated funds for writing such books in Hindi only**. Sure it helps to educate Hindi speakers about AIDS prevention. What about the Assamese, Bengalis, Kannadigas, Malayalis, Tamils, Telugus, et al? Outside of the Hindi belt (north-central India), even in states where Hindi is taught as a compulsory subject in schools, most doctors, para-medical professionals, social workers and village council workers do not have sufficient knowledge of Hindi to understand Hindi books on AIDS prevention. So only Hindi speaking regions benefit from these taxpayer supported preparation of Hindi books.

Indian Government attitude seems to be, "Do you want to benefit from Indian Government funded books on AIDS? Then know Hindi well enough to read and understand them. **If you do not know enough Hindi, it is your fault. Too bad, tough luck, good bye!**"

3. Final Comments

Our contention is that, monies that fund the writing of these AIDS prevention books come from taxes collected from non-Hindi peoples also. So Government of India should allocate funds for writing AIDS prevention books in all languages. That is the reasonable thing to do. But don't expect such reasonableness or fairness from the Indian Government that is dominated and controlled by Hindi politicians. Government of India is determined to fund the development of Hindi only, even if it adversely affects the health and welfare of non-Hindi peoples. (Under criticism, Indian Government may throw some funds to other languages also after a few years to mute the criticism. If and when it happens and you read it in a newspaper, check out and find for yourself how much money is allocated to Kannada and other languages compared to Hindi. We do not ask for equal funding but proportional to the population.)

Some Hindi supporters may say, "Let the state governments fund writing such books in their languages". All right, then let the Indian Government stay out of it completely and let the state governments do it. Let Hindi speaking states fund Hindi books, Tamil Nadu fund Tamil books, Kerala fund Malayalam books, etc. But since the Indian Government decided to fund Hindi books, it should fund such books in all languages. Is the duty of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to protect the health and welfare of Hindi speakers only or does it have a responsibly to promote the health and welfare of non-Hindi peoples also? Is it India or Hindia?

(First Published: June 2004)

2.
Pharmaceutical Labels (Drug Labels) in Hindi and English
What about the Health and Safety of Non-Hindi Peoples?

Thanjai Nalankilli

[This chapter is included in Volume 12 also (under the title " Indian Pharmacy Customers means Hindi Pharmacy Customers: What about non-Hindis?") because of its relevance there.]

1. Indian Government Action

Indian government issued an order to the pharmaceutical industry (drug industry) that all pharmaceutical labeling should be in English and Hindi from April 1, 2006 [The Hindu newspaper: March 16, 2006].

2. What About the Safety, Health and Welfare of Non-Hindi Patients?

Until now pharmacy labels are usually in English only. Although doctors and nurses tell patients about dosage, expiration dates and side effects, if the patient forgets it, they need to know English or get help from someone who knows English to read the label. This puts patients who do not know English at a disadvantage.

So it is a good idea to include mother tongue or state language in drug labels. That is not the new Indian government directive. Indian government requires that Hindi be added to the labels. It sure helps Hindi people. What about non-Hindi patients? Does Indian government care about non-Hindi people's health, safety and welfare?

If the Indian government truly wants to help sick people buying drugs to understand the manufacturing and expiry dates, side effects, and other basic information better, it would have ordered that all labels be in English and the state language. Then sick people in Tamil Nadu can read and understand the labels in Tamil, people in Andhra Pradesh in Telugu, people in Assam in Assamese, etc. That would be fair. But as far as the Hindi politicians who dominate the Indian parliament and thus effectively control the Indian government are concerned, only Hindi people matter.

It is not at all difficult to print pharmaceutical labels in the state language. Each state has a population more than that of many countries. For example, Tamil Nadu has a population of about 70 million. Such a large population can support drug labeling in Tamil. This is true for all states. As far as the Indian government is concerned it is yet another way to inject Hindi into non-Hindi lands. They are willing to sacrifice the health and welfare of non-Hindi peoples in order to promote and push Hindi into the throats of non-Hindi peoples.

We include English in the labeling for the benefit of people temporarily living out of state or traveling through another state. English is the de facto international language and

is useful whether you travel inside or outside India; also advanced knowledge in science and technology is available in English. We do not see a need for Hindi labels outside of Hindi states. What we need is equality of Indian languages.

3. Indian Customers mean Hindi Customers

Another thing that infuriates us is the reason given for the order to put English-Hindi labels. Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals called this a "customer-friendly measure" [The Hindu newspaper: March 16, 2006]. How is adding Hindi to the label (in addition to the existing English) customer-friendly to a non-Hindi customer? Only ones benefiting from this order are Hindi-speaking Indians. It seems "Indian customers" means "Hindi customers" in the eyes of the Hindi-centric Indian government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: We thank Mrs. Balachandran for bringing to our attention the news article about the Indian government order on pharmaceutical labeling.

(First Published: June 2006)

3.
Cooking Gas Explosions and Hindi Instructions

K. S.

Hundreds of thousands of people use cooking gas in India. Tamil Nadu State has its share of cooking gas users. Cooking gas, if not handled properly, could cause dangerous explosions, injuries and death. So cooking gas cylinders have safety instruction. It says in English "switch off regulator when not in use". The same safety instruction is written in Hindi also. There is no safety instruction in any other Indian language. Is it not a useful information to print in the states language? Indian government's attitude seems to be "if you don't know Hindi or English, die of cooking gas explosion, it is your fault." Indian government is more pre-occupied with thrusting Hindi into non-Hindi throats than caring for the safety of non-Hindi cooking gas using housewives and others.

Each of the 22 languages listed in these Indian constitution (22 of them, as of 2018) has a population of millions of people; population of each of these languages is higher than the population many countries. So print the instructions in the state language and English for every state. Hindi states get their instruction in Hindi; non-Hindi states get their instructions in their mother tongue. There is no need for Hindi in non-Hindi states making it easy for Hindi people to live in non-Hindi states without learning the state language. Equality of languages.

(First Published: January 2014)

4.
Indian Railways: Hindi Imposition and Safety of Non-Hindi Passengers

Thanjai Nalankilli

OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Safety-Related Advertisements in Hindi
3. Safety Instructions in Trains in Hindi and English Only
4. Concluding Remarks

1. Introduction

Train travel is popular in India. Hundreds of thousands of people travel by train everyday. Railways are owned and operated by the Indian government. This article discusses how Indian government's and Indian Railways' zealousness in imposing Hindi is endangering the safety of non-Hindi passengers who do not know Hindi or English. That is millions of people.

2. Safety-Related Advertisements in Hindi

Indian Railways placed a train travel safety related advertisement in the Tamil daily newspaper Thinathanthi on May 24, 2012; Thinathanthi has the largest number of readers among Tamil daily newspapers. A rough translation of the advertisement is as follows: "Small articles lead to big accidents. Please do not carry inflammable articles during your rail journey. Indian Railways --- Your safety ... Our aim."

It is surely a good idea to educate people about safe travel practices and the danger of carrying inflammable articles in trains. The problem here is that the advertisement in the Tamil Newspaper Thinathanthi is not in Tamil but in Hindi. Very few readers of this newspaper understand Hindi. A good idea of informing people of the danger of inflammable articles in trains is hijacked by Hindi zealots in top positions in the Indian government to impose Hindi on non-Hindi peoples, thus putting the lives of passengers at risk.

3. Safety Instructions in Trains in Hindi and English Only

Safety Instructions are placed in most trains to encourage and help safe travel practices. Here are two examples of safety instructions boards.

First was a safety instructions board seen in 2014 in a train traveling between Chennai (Madras) and Bengaluru (Bangalore). The first city is in Tamil Nadu State and the second in Karnataka State; both are non-Hindi states. The board says in Hindi and English, "To exit in emergency break glass, pull out pin and lift window frame grill". Passengers who

do not know Hindi or English would not know what to do in case of a fire or other major accidents. If people die in case of an accident or fire, Indian governments Hindi-supremacy language policy is responsible. **Blood is on the heads of those politicians and officials responsible for denying the use of state languages in these important boards.**

The second is a safety instruction board seen in 2014 in Nellai Express between Chennai and Thirunelveli (both cities located in the non-Hindi state of Tamil Nadu). There are instructions on the board in English under the titles, "Travel Safely", "Guidelines Under Emergency" and "Prevent Fire". Same information is in Hindi also. **Passengers who do not know English or Hindi are deprived of this critical information.** Ability to read these instructions may mean life or death in an emergency situation. Yet the instruction is not printed in the state language.

4. Concluding Remarks

Is Indian Railways interested in the safety of Hindi speakers only? In the name of establishing Hindi supremacy all over India, it is blacking out useful safety message to non-Hindi speakers. Indian Railways' attitude seems to be, "Learn Hindi if you want to benefit from our safety messages. We don't care if non-Hindi passengers live, injured or die during accidents and emergencies." This is Hindi arrogance of the worst kind.

(First Published: April 2018)

5.
Indian Coast Guards, Protection of non-Hindi Peoples and the Language Policy

Thanjai Nalankilli

OUTLINE

1. Duties of Indian Coast Guard and its Language Policy
2. Tamil Nadu Fisherman Died because of ICG's Language Policy
3. Hindi Poetry Festival at Indian Coastguard Office in Tamil Nadu
4. Amend the Indian Constitution

1. Duties of Indian Coast Guard and its Language Policy

One of the duties of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is providing protection and assistance to fishermen in distress while at sea (according to their web site).

All coastguards are required to know English and Hindi. There is no requirement that they know the local language where they work; for example, many coastguards posted in Andhra do not know Telugu, many posted in West Bengal do not know Bengali, etc.

This lack of knowledge of the local language is a hardship to local fishermen because they are unable to talk to the coastguards when they need information or help. Indian government's arrogant, callous attitude seems to be, "If non-Hindi fishermen want help from coastguard, let them learn Hindi or English". Why are we paying taxes if we cannot get help from the coast guard?

2. Tamil Nadu Fisherman Died because of ICG's Language Policy

Indian Government's Hindi-centric attitude has a blood toll—non-Hindi blood. Here are the details.

A Tamil Nadu fisherman died from Sri Lankan Navy shooting in March 2017 because Indian Coast Guard ship nearby could not understand a distress phone call from fishermen in Tamil; the fishermen did not know Hindi or English. According to the fishermen with him, he was alive for an hour after the shooting and could have survived if Indian coastguard arrived upon receiving the distress call and provided medical aid. See the interview (in Tamil) with one of the fishermen at: https://www.facebook.com/puli.arason/videos/777098869120637/ This video aired in some TV channels and then posted on Facebook in the Internet on March 7, 2017.

Death of this fisherman falls squarely on Indian government policy of not requiring its employees' proficiency in the local language, but requiring only proficiency in English and Hindi.

3. Hindi Poetry Festival at Indian Coastguard Office in Tamil Nadu

Instead of teaching its employees the language of the local people, Indian Coast Guard is spending money and time on holding "Hindi Poetry Festivals". Here is a tweet message from the Indian Coast Guard in March 2018, "Hindi Kavi Sammelan (Hindi poetry Festival) was organised at Chennai (Tamil Nadu) on March 14, 2018 by Indian Coast Guard Regional Headquarters (East) and Town Official Language Implementation Committee to promote Hindi language. Poets from various government agencies participated in the event". (Twitter Message from Indian Coast Guard; March 21-22, 2018)

Instead of promoting Hindi, teach coast guards the language of the fishermen it was asked to protect. Instead of organizing Hindi poetry festivals, organize classes in the local language.

4. Amend the Indian Constitution

Indian Coastguards is not the only Indian security organization that does not require proficiency in the local language. Many employees at Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indian Railway Protection Force (RPF), security guards at airports, ports and central government institutions such as Neyveli Lignite Corporation do not know the local language.

It is high time that Indian parliament amends the constitution to require working knowledge of the state language to all employees at all central security forces (Central Industrial Security Force, Indian Railway Protection Force and any other). If Hindi-belt members of parliament block such an amendment, non-Hindi peoples should pressure their political leaders to take whatever action is necessary to get it done.

(First Published: April 2018)

6.
Hindi In-flight Safety Announcements in Airplanes: What About State Languages?

Thanjai Nalankilli

In-flight safety announcements made in Indian-government owned Air India are in Hindi and English only even in flights originating and terminating in non-Hindi states. What about those who do not know either Hindi or English? Die in case of an air crash? If you say, "those who fly know English": (1) Everyone who fly does not necessarily know English. (2) If every flyer knows English, why Hindi announcements? Make the announcements in English and the languages of the departure and destination cities.

India's Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha told the lower house of parliament that there are no plans to make announcements of pre-flight safety instructions in regional languages (News18.com, March 8, 2018). By the way, Hindi is a regional language too, language of the north-central region.

(First Published: August 2018)

7.
A Killer Virus (Caronavirus, COVID19) and Hindi Imperialism

Thanjai Nalankilli

A new virus (Coronavirus or COVID-19) killed thousands of people around the world in 2020. It entered India in or just before March 2020. In order to educate people on how to reduce the spread of the virus, Indian government asked cell phone companies to replace the caller tune with Coronavirus advisory. A good idea but the advisory is in Hindi and English only. (gadgetbridge.com; March 9, 2020) So a Hindi person can benefit from this message even if he/she knows his//her mother tongue only? What about those Indians whose mother tongue is not Hindi and know only the mother tongue? Are they doomed to die in India because they were not fortunate to be born in Hindi land? Is India for Hindi people only? Are non-Hindi lives cheaper than Hindi lives? God save the non-Hindi peoples of India. Indian government is more interested in establishing the supremacy of Hindi over India than saving non-Hindi lives.

[NOTE: If sufficient protest is launched by non-Hindi leaders, Indian government may ask cell phone companies to give the advisory other languages also. Coronavirus spreads fast. Every day of delay in offering the advisory in all Indian languages would mean hundreds of more people falling ill, suffering and some of them dying. If the Indian government is not set on establishing Hindi as the supreme language of India, it would have asked cell companies to use the language of each state from Day One.

Another point. It is offered to Hindi people in silver platter from Day One. Why do non-Hindi Indians have to plead, beg and protest to give the same advisory message in our languages? We pay taxes too.

APPENDIX

Actually non-Hindi states like South Indian states are subsidizing Hindi states hugely. Here are some statistics from Reference 1 (The News Minute: 14 July 2016). Percentage of tax monies received back from Indian Government by 3 southern states and 3 Hindi-belt states are listed below [these numbers are from Reference 1]. What do these numbers mean? For example, for every 100 Rupees Indian government collects in taxes from Karnataka, only 47 Rupees is given back to Karnataka in the form of financial grants, central government projects, etc. Similarly, for every 100 Rupees Indian government collects in taxes from the Hindi-belt state of Bihar, 96 Rupees is given back to it in the form of financial grants, central government projects, etc.

--------- Non-Hindi Southern States --------

(The southern states of Andhra and Telangana are not included because the data is prior to the year when these two states were created.)
Karnataka --------------------- Rs. 47
Kerala ------------------------- Rs. 25

Tamil Nadu ------------------- Rs. 35

--------- Hindi-Belt States -----------------

Bihar ------------------------- Rs. 96
Madya Pradesh --------------- Rs. 75
Uttar Pradesh --------------- Rs. 176 (yes, it is Rs. 176)

These numbers tell the story. Yet non-Hindi peoples have to take back seat to Hindi people in health and safety measures. Is it fair?

REFERENCE

1. The News Minute: 14 July 2016
(http://web.archive.org/web/20160715145421/http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/united-states-south-india-can-southern-collective-get-us-better-deal-delhi-46501)

(First Published: April 2020)

8.
Hindi and Computers

P. Kumaresan

"If computerization has to spread in India, it has to be done in Hindi", so said the then Director of Bhaba Atomic Research Center a decade ago in 1988. This is, an educated and intelligent scientist heading a premier research center in India. But his statement defies logic. How will the use of Hindi spread computerization in non-Hindi states? Did he say this to please the Hindi politicians who hold the reins of power in India and thus hold the key to advancements in the upper echelons of Indian bureaucracy?

As far as Hindi politicians are concerned, propagation of Hindi comes before anything else whether it is alleviating poverty in the country or improving the literacy levels and health care of the people. Those high level bureaucrats who play along with them get the promotions and move ahead. Have you ever heard of a high level officer in the Indian bureaucracy speaking against the imposition of Hindi? Show me one, and I will show you an officer who was sidelined and stagnated. This is the reality of India that is Hindia.

Let us examine the logic, or lack of it, in the statement of the former director of the Bhaba Atomic Research Center. What is the logic of his assertion that only the use of Hindi will spread computerization in India? We can understand that the use of Hindi will make it easier for Hindi speaking people to work with computers and thus help spread computer usage in Hindi speaking areas like Uttar Pradesh and Madya Pradesh. How will it help spread computerization in Tamil Nadu or Kerala or West Bengal or Andra Pradesh or Nagaland or Karnataka? Obviously these "peripheral" areas away from the Hindi heartland do not matter. To the Hindi politicians, India means Hindi heartland. If we look at the Bhaba Atomic Research Center Director's statement within this framework that only the Hindi heartland matters and the other areas do not count, then it makes sense. His statement squares right with the attitude of Hindi politicians that **"being an Indian means knowing Hindi"**. That is their criterion for being an Indian of good standing. Government of India will do everything to benefit Hindi speakers. If you did not have the good fortune of being born in Hindi heartland, then you have to learn Hindi to benefit from the millions and millions of rupees that the Indian government spends on developing Hindi.

Indian government has spent millions and millions of our tax money to develop computer technology and software in Hindi. **This means two blows to non-Hindi speaking Indians.** One: Why should we, the non-Hindi-speakers, pay taxes to develop science, computer technology and software in Hindi? That money could be spent on things that will benefit all Indians, not just Hindi speakers. Two: It may take ten years, may be twenty, but once full-pledged computerization is made possible in Hindi, Government of India will insist that all central government employees do all government business using computers in Hindi as much as possible. Non-Hindi employees will have to learn computerized word processing, spreadsheet, database management, etc. in Hindi, thus giving Hindi-speaking employees a head start. Already many non-Hindis in central

government employment are murmuring that they are sidelined in promotions because while they are forced to learn Hindi and are spending valuable time on it, Hindi-speakers concentrate on other more relevant subjects and their work, and move ahead.

In summary, the taxes we pay foot the bill for the development of Hindi in computer usage, and then we end up losers in Indian government jobs because of the use of Hindi there. We get it from both barrels of the Hindi gun.

[NOTE: Presently (Year 1998) computer software in Tamil are being developed by private organizations and individuals with almost no support from Indian Government. Five or ten years from now the Indian Government, under criticism, may provide some funds for Tamil also. Those who may be reading this article in those years should check the comparative funding for Hindi and other Indian languages. I bet Hindi would get most of the money and all other languages would get a small fraction of it.]

(First Published: January 1998)

9.
Hindi Hegemony on the Web and a Broken Promise

Thanjai Nalankilli

OUTLINE

1. Hindi Hegemony on the Web
2. Rajnath Singh and the New Web Site
3. Do What You Said

1. Hindi Hegemony on the Web

An Indian Government Home Ministry memorandum dated May 27, 2014 states, "It is ordered that government employees and officials of all ministries, departments, corporations or banks, who have made official accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Google, YouTube or blogs should use Hindi, or both Hindi and English but give priority to Hindi." (The Economic Times: June 17, 2014). Essentially, the memorandum says that English is optional on social media posts but Hindi is mandatory. I think it is a violation of the two-language policy and the Constitution of India.

An uproar started in Tamil Nadu. The first to shoot across the bow was former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and President of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Mr. Muthuvel Karunanidhi. The 90 years old Karunanidhi (born on June 3, 1924) said, "Giving priority to Hindi will be construed as a first step towards attempt at creating differences among non-Hindi speaking people and making them second class citizens". He asked why Hindi should be given priority over other languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. (The Economic Times: June 19, 2014).

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa came swinging against the order. She wrote to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "This move would be against the letter and spirit of the Official Languages Act, 1963. As you are aware, this is a highly sensitive issue and causes disquiet to the people of Tamil Nadu who are very proud of and passionate about their linguistic heritage ... I had also urged [in her memorandum to the Prime Minister dated June 3, 2014] that all the languages included in the 8-th Schedule of the Constitution of India be declared as official languages of India. If this request is fulfilled the use of all official languages on social media can be encouraged" (NDTV.com June 20, 2014).

Reacting to these and other criticisms and opposition, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said, "The home ministry is of the view that all Indian languages are important. The ministry is committed to promote all languages of the country." (Deccan Chronicle: June 21, 2014)

2. Rajnath Singh and the New Web Site

Time to prove that Minister Rajnath Singh was serious about promoting all languages came sooner than expected.

About five weeks after Mr. Rajnath Singh's statement that his ministry is committed to promote all languages of the country, on July 26, 2014, Prime Minister Modi opened a new web site where people can make suggestions and discuss how to better govern the country (http://mygov.nic.in/). Mr. Modi said that the web site "would bridge gap gulf between people and government. Democracy cannot succeed without people's participation in government and this participation should not be limited only during elections". I visited this web site on July 28, 2014; the web site is in English and Hindi only. So, only people whose mother tongue is Hindi and those non-Hindis who know either Hindi or English can provide suggestions and "participate in the government" (as Mr. Modi called it). Others are left out of this web site. Does it not elevate those whose mother tongue is Hindi to a higher level than other Indians? Will Mr. Rajnath Singh, as a member of Modi's cabinet, holding the important portfolio of Home Ministry, ask the Prime Minister to include all languages listed in the Indian Constitution (22 languages as of 2014). It is possible. In fact, it is not that difficult. If companies like Google and Facebook can allow their users to use dozens and dozens of languages from around the world, why cannot the Indian government?

3. Do What You Said

Was Home Minister Rajnath Singh sincere in saying that his ministry and the Indian Government are committed to promoting all Indian languages or was he saying that to deflect the criticism and opposition to the Home Ministry memorandum? Taking the Home Minister at his word and we ask him and the Government of India to do the following:

1.
All employees at Indian government offices should be proficient in the state language where the office is located, and must be able to communicate with local people and businesses in the state language (speak, read and write).

2.
All communications (letters, e-mails, telephone calls, etc.) to businesses and people should be in the state language.

3.
All Indian government web sites and postings in social media (Facebook, twitter, blogs, etc.) should be in all languages listed in the constitution.

4.
Appoint only those who know the state language as high court judges.

Update:

Under mounting opposition from Tamil Nadu and a few from other non-Hindi states, Prime Minister's office issued a statement that the May 27, 2014 memorandum was misunderstood and that both English and Hindi would be used. Mr. Rajnath Singh's statement that all Indian languages will be promoted is still empty rhetoric to pacify opposition from non-Hindi states.

(First Published: July 2014; Updated: February 2019)

10.
Hindi-centric Automated Computer Translation of Indian Languages

Thanjai Nalankilli

OUTLINE

Abbreviations
Executive Summary
A Note
1. Introduction
2. A Few Questions to TIFAC
3. There is no Language Family Called "Indian Languages" (from Linguistic Perspective)
4. English-to-Telugu versus English-to-Hindi-to-Telugu
5. Quality of Computer Translations Degraded by this Multi-Step Approach
6. Oppose the Meta-Language Approach

ABBREVIATIONS

ISO - International Standardization Organization (International Organization for Standardization)

TIFAC - Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council

A NOTE

Author of this article is from Tamil Nadu and so Tamil language is used as an example but the conclusions of this article are applicable to some other Indian languages also.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Director of an Indian government affiliated organization, TIFAC, had suggested that automated computer translation of all Indian languages from English go through a meta-language. Although the meta-language was not specified, based on our experience with the Indian government, we have reason to expect that meta-language would be either Hindi or Sanskrit. This Hindi-centric approach should be opposed because all Indian languages would forever become dependent on Hindi and the quality of translations would also suffer.

1. Introduction

Indian language localization community (those involved in creating Internet content in local languages like Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Kannada, Bengali ...) met in New Delhi (India) on September 24-25, 2016. A proposal by the executive director of TIFAC, Dr. Prabhat Ranjan, raised concern in this writer. "Ranjan's team found English to Hindi translation easier when documents are first translated into another Indian language. Based

on this experience, Ranjan bounced the idea of agreeing on a meta language to ease the translation process." [Reference 3]. Reference 3 did not mention what was the "another Indian language" that Dr. Ranjan's team used in the English to Hindi translation. Also, Dr. Ranjan did not suggest a choice for the meta-language.

Our fear is that the Indian government or some other organization or individual may try to elevate Hindi or Sanskrit as the meta language on the basis of Dr. Ranjan's statement, although he did not suggest a choice for the meta-language at the meeting.

TIFAC is an autonomous body under Department of Science and Technology of Government of India. Indian government efforts to establish Hindi/Sanskrit as a super-language over all other Indian languages is no secret. Indian government Home Minister Rajnath Singh said that Sanskrit is the mother of all Indian languages and he considers Hindi as the elder sister of all regional languages because it is closer to Sanskrit (Hindustan Times; September 16, 2015). This statement may be true for SOME Indian languages but false for others, for example, Tamil. One should not bunch linguistically unrelated languages into a single family.

This effort to establish Hindi/Sanskrit as a meta language through which all automated computer translations flow should be opposed, and international standardization bodies like ISO should not accept it. These bodies should not become unwitting tools in the hands of the Indian government or other vested interests.

2. A Few Questions to TIFAC

Summary of Dr. Prabhat Ranjan's speech says, "Our team found English to Hindi translation easier when documents are first translated into another Indian language". What was that "another Indian language"? Was it Sanskrit or some other Indo-Aryan language? It would not be a surprise if that "another Indian language" was Sanskrit or another Indo-Aryan language. Not all Indian languages are related to Sanskrit/Hindi. His conclusion would not hold for those languages. Tamil, for one, has very little in common with Sanskrit/Hindi. Professor George L. Hart of University of California, Berkeley, United States of America (USA) said, "Tamil is extremely old (as old as Latin and older than Arabic); it arose as an entirely independent tradition, with almost no influence from Sanskrit or other languages" [Reference 1]. He says, "The early origins of Tamil and of its writing system have helped it keep its separate identity from Sanskrit. ....Its separate identity and character have been cultivated and preserved from its beginnings to the present, and they will be preserved." [Reference 2].

Just because a small percentage words are common between Sanskrit and Tamil, neither may be concluded as derived from the other. There are so many English words used in Tamil these days; it does not mean Tamil is derived from English.

3. There is no Language Family Called "Indian Languages" (from Linguistic Perspective)

There is no language family or language group called "Indian Languages" from the perspective of linguistics. Indian languages is a political marker or geographic marker. The two main language families in India (or South Asia) are Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Indo-Aryan languages are spoken by about 78.05% of Indians and Dravidian languages spoken by about 19.64%. The remaining 2.31% people speak languages belonging to Austro-Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai and a few other minor language families [Reference 4]. Hindi and Sanskrit and a number of other languages belong to the Indo-Aryan family; Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and some other languages belong to the Dravidian family.

Any suggestions or recommendations of translating English to any Indian language through Sanskrit/Hindi (or any "Indian meta language") is without merit. It has no scientific rationale. Using data, if any exists, of translating English to an Indo-Aryan language through Hindi/Sanskrit to justify translating English to a Dravidian language through Hindi/Sanskrit would be voodoo science, voodoo-linguistics. It is unacceptable.

4. English-to-Tamil versus English-to-Hindi-to-Tamil

For the sake of argument let us say than Hindi-to-Tamil automated computer translation is cheaper and more accurate than English-to-Tamil translation. Is English-to-Hindi-to-Tamil translation cheaper and more accurate than English-to-Tamil? I doubt it. Such a scenario should be studied and established for each and every Indian language--be it Telugu or Malayalam or Kannada or Telugu or Bengali or Oriya or Manipuri. We cannot accept this meta language suggestion based on undemonstrated hypotheses.

5. Quality of Computer Translations Degraded by this Multi-Step Approach

It is an established fact that quality is degraded during automated computer translations. If one translates a text from English to Russian and then translate back the translated Russian text to English, it would not be the same as the original English text. The same would happen in the proposed meta language three-step approach. A direct translation would be truer to the original text than an indirect three-step approach suggested by TIFAC executive director Dr. Ranjan. That is, a Tamil translation directly from English would be closer to the original English text than first translating English to Hindi and then Hindi to Tamil. So Hindi would end up with higher quality translations and the other Indian languages like Marathi, Oriya, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu would end up with lesser quality translations. We cannot allow such a systematic two-tier approach, a higher level of translation for Hindi/Sanskrit and a lower level of translation for the other languages.

6. Oppose the Meta-Language Approach

We explained in the preceding sections how centralizing translations through Sanskrit/Hindi would be detrimental to many Indian languages. Politicians, scholars and the public should oppose this approach. Tamil scholars and computer specialists active in automated computer translation of Indian languages should contact the Unicode standards

organizations and request them to contact not only the Indian government but also state governments on language related matters. India is a multi-lingual country. States were reorganized on the basis of languages in the 1950s so that the major languages have a state where each major language can flourish. State governments are there to nurture and protect them. So it is appropriate that recommendations on languages come from the states.

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11.
Hindi Hegemony on Indian Government Websites

Thanjai Nalankilli

Most multinational corporate websites offer multiple language options so people may access information or use the website in their mother tongues. Already many languages spoken in India are available in many multinational corporate websites. Yet most Indian government websites are in English and Hindi only (as of 2017). If non-Hindi states put sufficient pressure, may be Indian government may add a few more languages in a few more government websites. Why should we wait? It is like a mother allowing her daughter to sit at the dinner table and eat a sumptuous meal and then any leftover food is given to the stepdaughters. We want to eat at the table at the same time as the Hindi people. We pay taxes. We demand equality on Indian Government websites. We give a few example Indian government websites that are in English and Hindi only are (this is not a complete list, there are dozens more such websites):

(1) Indian Railways, operated by the Indian government, created a website www.coms.indianrailways.gov.in where people can file complaints; you can file complaints in English or Hindi only (as of March 2015).

(2) Indian Government introduced web tools like audio-typing aid and is also working on making available Hindi classic literature digitally (Economic Times; January 10, 2016). What about other languages?

(3) Secretary of the Department of Official Language (under the Home Ministry) instructed that all central government websites should be in Hindi and English and the default opening of websites should be Hindi (Economic Times; January 23, 2016). No mention of other languages. No plans to include other languages.

(4) Indian Government set up a web site to help voters www.electoralsearch.in There you can locate polling stations near your house, apply for enrollment in the electoral roll, etc. This site is in Hindi and English only (as of April 2016). So only Hindi people can get the information and register in their mother tongue. Others have to know at least one of two alien languages, Hindi or English. This is outrageous in the so-called largest democracy. It is not democracy it is Hindi crazy.

(5) Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) website page for e-ticketing is in Hindi and English only. Near the top of the page there is an option to choose Hindi or English. (As seen on June 2, 2016.) Our demand is, provide option to reserve tickets in all Indian languages. All Indian languages are equal. We all pay taxes to the Indian government.

(6) Indian government's Department of Consumer Affairs website is in English and Hindi only. They also have a Toll Free number and it provides information in English and Hindi only. (As seen on September 7, 2016)

(7) Passport and visa information will be in Hindi and English on the official website of the external affairs ministry. People can download passport application form in Hindi, fill it in Hindi and upload it (OneIndia.com; April 23, 2017). Where are the other languages?

In the course of the article, we mentioned that we, non-Hindi peoples, pay taxes and yet we are treated like step children. Do you know that some non-Hindi states pay far more taxes to Indian government than Hindi states? See Chapter 7 of this volume for details.

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